



2007 MICHIGAN DEER HUNTING PROSPECTS

THE STATEWIDE FORECAST

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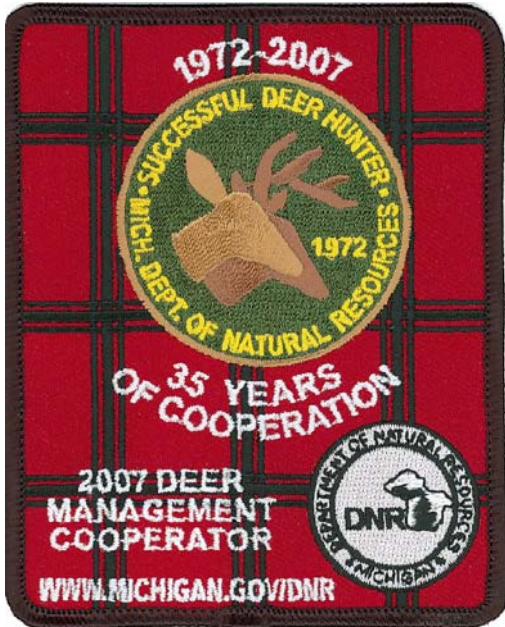
The number of deer expected to be harvested in Michigan during the 2007 deer hunting season is anticipated to be similar to last year's estimated harvest of 450,000 deer. An expected 735,000 individuals will purchase at least one deer license in 2007.

"Hunters will spend more than 10 million days enjoying deer hunting recreation during the archery, firearm, and muzzleloading seasons combined.* This is more days spent deer hunting than in any other state or Canadian province," said Doug Reeves, acting Wildlife Division chief. "Deer hunters will contribute more than \$500 million to the Michigan economy through the purchase of such items as food, lodging, transportation, and equipment."

Biologists estimate Michigan's statewide fall whitetail population to be slightly above the estimated 2006 deer population. The deer herd is dynamic and not evenly distributed across the state. Deer distribution varies within every Deer Management Unit (DMU). Most of the deer population is found on private land.

In the last decade, the southern half of the Lower Peninsula has contained an increasing proportion of the statewide deer population. For the last four years, the estimated southern Michigan deer harvest exceeded 50 percent of the statewide harvest. For the last two years, 60 percent of all deer taken were taken in southern Michigan. This trend is expected to continue in 2007.

- * Archery Deer Hunting season is open from October 1 through November 14 and December 1 through January 1. Firearm season is November 15 through 30, and the Muzzleloading season is December 7 through 16 in Zone 1, December 14 through 23 in Zone 2, and December 7 through December 23 in Zone 3. Late Antlerless firearm season is December 17 through January 1, on private land only in 36 DMUs in the Lower Peninsula.



The DNR provides about 90 deer check stations around the state to help evaluate and monitor Michigan's deer herd. "We'd like to once again encourage our hunters to stop in at one of our deer check stations to have their deer checked and we'll provide them with a deer management cooperator patch as our thank you. We have some slight changes to deer check station schedules this year so please make sure you check the posted schedules and/or call ahead to ensure that your preferred station will be open when you arrive," said Penney Melchoir, Wildlife field operations supervisor.

The location and scheduled hours of operation for all deer check stations are available on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) web site, (www.michigan.gov/dnr)

Biologists will be collecting deer heads from hunters wishing to cooperate in the ongoing statewide surveillance for bovine tuberculosis (TB). Hunters in the Counties of Alcona, Alpena, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle are encouraged to submit their deer heads for TB testing.

STEWARDSHIP

The DNR is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state's natural resources for current and future generations. This commitment includes managing white-tailed deer in a sustainable manner to yield healthy fawns, does, and bucks, without negatively impacting habitat, other wildlife species, or creating undue hardship to private interests.

Today, deer live in every county of the state. The whitetails reproductive capability and their ability to adapt to the variety of habitats across the state have resulted in a Michigan deer herd estimated to be over 1.6 million animals. This is exciting to citizens who enjoy hunting or observing deer, but is problematic to the habitat and the overall ecosystem. Deer in most parts of Michigan have a higher birth rate than death rate each year. The number of deer in an area impacts the quality and quantity of habitat, deer productivity, and deer/human conflicts. Harvesting deer through hunting helps keep the deer herd in balance with a variety of factors. A regulated hunter-harvest of both sexes is necessary to maintain a healthy and thriving deer population. Antlerless deer license quotas are established for each DMU to achieve a desired harvest of antlerless deer for that unit. Where an increased deer population is desired, no antlerless deer

licenses are offered. The 2007 statewide harvest is expected to be approximately an equal number of antlered and antlerless deer. In southern Michigan, the DNR would like to see the antlerless harvest exceed the antlered harvest.

Hunters are reminded that they can donate to Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger when purchasing their deer license. Donations are used to process venison for families in need.

UPPER PENINSULA (UP)

The unusually mild winter had little impact deer in the UP this year, with most deer surviving winter in excellent condition. As a result of the mild winter, fawn production and survival appears to be above normal. These two factors should result in hunters seeing more deer in the UP than the last couple of years. Deer are not evenly distributed across the UP, with fewer deer in the northern areas. The highest deer numbers will be seen in the south-central part of the UP (Menominee, Delta, Dickinson, Iron, and southern Marquette counties). The UP yearling buck population is expected to be slightly above normal, which should produce a good buck harvest. Some counties in the UP still have more deer than desired by the DNR. Antlerless deer hunting opportunities on private farm lands this year may help to reduce the population. Remember, only public land antlerless licenses are valid on Commercial Forest Land.

EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA MANAGEMENT UNIT

Chippewa, east Alger, Luce, Mackinac and Schoolcraft Counties

Rex Ainslie: 906-293-5131

For the second consecutive year, winter was relatively mild, resulting in higher than average survival of yearlings and good fawn production this spring. It is estimated that the Eastern Upper Peninsula (EUP) will experience a fall deer population slightly above that of 2006. However, distribution of deer will not be uniform with agricultural areas having higher deer densities, and public land and heavily forested areas containing fewer deer than the average for these areas. Likewise, the southern portion of the EUP will have higher deer numbers, with the deer densities decreasing farther north.

Although older bucks will be few due to poor fawn survival during the harsh winters of 2004-05, one and two-year-old bucks should be present in good numbers with good antler development. A high proportion of yearling bucks should be expected in the harvest this year.

The availability of antlerless licenses has been increased in most areas of the EUP with a corresponding increase in antlerless harvest anticipated. Hunters are encouraged to scout private agricultural lands and check with farmers who may desire fewer deer on their lands.

For the third straight year, fruit and nut production has been variable across the EUP. Drought conditions have been severe over most of the growing season with good production observed in only lowland and moist areas. This situation may influence where deer can be found. Late summer rains have not been sufficient to mitigate the drought impacts.

Due to safety and environmental concerns related to the Sleeper Lake Fire north of Newberry, hunters are cautioned that access and hunting conditions may not be suitable this year and it is recommended they seek alternate hunting locations. Among the safety concerns is the large number of standing trees with weakened root systems that are likely to topple with little or no warning in windy conditions. ORV riding is prohibited in the fire area and the DNR will be strongly enforcing this throughout the fall as ongoing restoration work in the forest continues.

Hunters on Drummond Island in Chippewa County (DMU 117), are reminded that they are permitted to take an antlered deer only if it has at least one antler with two or more antler points, each one more than one inch long (no spikes).

Unit Biologists:

East Alger, Schoolcraft Counties, and Garden Peninsula:

Terry Minzey, 906-452-6236

Luce and West Mackinac Counties:
Kristie Sitar, 906-293-5024
Chippewa and East Mackinac Counties:
Erynn Call, 906-635-6161

WESTERN UPPER PENINSULA MANAGEMENT UNIT

Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Menominee,
Ontonagon, and west Alger Counties

Robert Doepker: 906-228-6561

Deer numbers across the Western Upper Peninsula (WUP) Management Unit will be higher compared to last year. The winter of 2006-2007 was one of the mildest on record for the WUP since record keeping began in the early 1960s. The severity of winter weather is a major factor determining the number, physical development and productivity of deer in the WUP. "This past winter, deer were generally not restricted to wintering areas and were mobile throughout much of the winter," said Bob Doepker, Wildlife Management Unit Supervisor for the WUP. The mild winter conditions resulted in excellent over-winter survival. Spring surveys documented a low over-winter loss of deer. Fawn production this year, based on summer sightings, appears to be good. Deer densities are highest in the agricultural areas compared to forested areas in the WUP. Normal fawn production in spring 2006 and excellent over-winter survival should combine to produce good numbers of yearling bucks in 2007. Yearling males generally represent the majority of bucks in the buck segment of the herd, and consequently, in the buck harvest.

Across the WUP, prolonged drought continued through most of the summer, and lack of moisture dried grasses and forbs in many areas. Re-growth in hayfields after one cutting of hay was scant. Palatability and nutritional value to deer declined. Late summer/early fall rains helped revitalize ground vegetation in some areas. Deer will be consuming a bumper crop of apples and a poor-moderate acorn crop.

Antler development and body size will be above average this fall, especially in the two and one-half year-old bucks. As yearlings a year ago, this age group of bucks was impressive in both characteristics. The largest bucks (heaviest weight and best antlers) typically come from agricultural areas, but some nice bucks are also taken from forested country where access is limited and they have an opportunity to grow older.

Deer in the west-central counties of the WUP have experienced high winter mortality in past years; however, deer numbers continue to gradually increase and should show moderate increases again this year. Deer numbers in the northern portions and south-central UP will be modestly higher than in recent past. The highest deer numbers on state land are in southern Dickinson and Iron

counties, west Menominee County and on scattered small parcels in west Delta County. Deer will again be most plentiful on the agricultural landscape of southern Menominee and western Delta counties. This land, however, is privately owned, and permission is required to hunt it. Hunters interested in private land hunting should make courteous landowner contacts early in the year. Private Land Antlerless Deer licenses are still available in the agricultural DMUs and they can be purchased at a rate of one per day (two per year) until the quota is reached. These antlerless licenses are valid during all seasons with appropriate equipment to match the season. Quotas for public land antlerless deer licenses are usually smaller than for private land and they sell out quickly.

Unit Biologists:

Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon Counties
Rob Aho, 906-353-6651

Iron and Dickinson Counties
Doug Wagner, 906-875-6622

Delta and Menominee Counties
Craig Albright, 906-786-2351

Marquette and west Alger Counties
Terry McFadden, 906-228-6561

Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP)

The deer herd in the NLP is expected to be slightly larger than the herd last year, but smaller than the deer herd in the mid-1990s. The herd in this part of the state has been intentionally reduced to assist in decreasing the transmission of bovine TB. The incident rate for bovine TB increased in 2006 to above two percent for the first time in four years. To help eradicate TB in deer, antlerless deer licenses in the TB positive counties will be available. Leftover public land antlerless licenses in these seven county special regulations units will be sold over the counter until the quota is reached. Buck harvest is expected to be similar to last year and the antlerless deer harvest is expected to increase from 2006. The deer herd remains over goal in the DMUs bordering southern Michigan but is near goal in most of the remaining DMUs. Antlerless licenses are not available for Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, or Wexford Counties.

NORTHEAST MANAGEMENT UNIT

Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Oscoda Crawford, Emmet, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Roscommon Counties

Glen Matthews: 989-732-3541

The Northeast Management Unit (NEMU) will enter the fall deer season with a very good deer population. Following an outstanding acorn crop in 2005, good fawn production and modest antlerless harvest in 2006, and a moderate 2007 winter, deer numbers are up noticeably. The buck kill may not exceed the excellent harvest that occurred in 2006, but should be quite good. Antler growth

in yearling bucks will not equal the exceptional level observed in 2006, but a good number of two year olds and older bucks are present in the population and will produce some nice trophies. Private land antlerless quotas are 21 percent higher than last year's quota, but substantially lower than the numbers available from 2003 through 2005. A modest increase in antlerless harvest will likely boost the overall kill in the NEMU t in 2007.

Best success rates, as usual, will be experienced in the mixed agricultural and forest land areas of Ogemaw, Iosco, and western Antrim, and Charlevoix Counties. Private forest lands in Alpena, Alcona, and Montmorency Counties are maintaining good numbers of deer and success rates will be good for bucks as well as antlerless deer. Public lands in Alcona, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, and Roscommon Counties will provide good deer hunting opportunities.

Acorn production is spotty at best this year and will not be a factor in deer distribution. Apple trees are loaded with small but abundant fruit this year and will be attracting deer well into the fall. Recent rains have begun to rejuvenate ground vegetation and deer will be feeding heavily in fields, openings and low ground until snow cover.

Ongoing TB management efforts require a large sample of deer heads from northeast Michigan to continue to assess the distribution and rate of infection.

"There is a particular need for deer samples from Iosco, Ogemaw, Roscommon, and Crawford Counties and hunters are urged to come to any DNR check station to submit heads for the TB surveillance effort. Slow but important progress is being made in the effort to control TB in deer and it is important for hunters to continue to observe baiting and feeding restrictions in the TB management areas and to harvest at least as many antlerless deer as bucks," said Glen Matthews, NEMU supervisor.

Very few elk are accidentally shot by deer hunters, however, those coming to the elk range in Montmorency, Otsego, Cheboygan, and southwest Presque Isle counties are reminded to be careful and avoid the unintended shooting of an elk.

Unit Biologists:

Alcona, Crawford, and Oscoda Counties:

Elaine Carlson, 989-826-3211, extension 7030

Alpena, Montmorency and Presque Isle Counties:

Vacant (contact Gaylord DNR at 989-732-3541)

Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet, and Otsego Counties:

Brian Mastenbrook, 989-732-3541

Iosco, Ogemaw, and Roscommon Counties:

Mark Boersen, 989-275-5151

NORTHWEST MANAGEMENT UNIT

Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee,
Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Wexford Counties

Larry Visser: 231-775-9727

Deer hunters in the Northwest Management Unit (NWMU) should expect to see the same or slightly more deer than they saw in 2006. Antlerless quotas have been reduced for the past several years in many of the DMUs, and deer populations have been increasing. Deer came through the winter in good condition. Fawn production appeared to be good this spring, said Larry Visser, NWMU supervisor.

Deer numbers in the northern counties (Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau) remain below goal. Firearm antlerless permits are only available in Leelanau County which is a quality deer management area. Reduced harvest of younger bucks in this DMU for the past years is resulting in an increased proportion of older bucks.

In the central counties (Manistee, Osceola, Lake, Mason, Missaukee, and Wexford) deer populations appear to be at goal. Deer numbers are higher on private land than on public land. Some of the best hunting in these counties is typically found where agricultural land and forest land are interspersed.

Two of the southern counties (Oceana and Newaygo) are similar to the central counties with deer populations near goal. Deer populations in these two counties should be similar to 2006. The other southern county, Mecosta, continues to remain significantly above goal. This county has a good mixture of croplands, wetlands, and woodlands which provide good deer habitat and excellent deer hunting.

The soft mast crop was heavily impacted by the drought this summer, but the red and black oak acorn production appears to be good across the NWMU. White oak acorn production appears to be below average. Also, there is an excellent apple crop. Antler development this fall is predicted to be average due the light acorn crop last year.

Unit Biologists:

Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Manistee Counties:

Rich Earle, 231-922-5280

Lake, Mason, Missaukee, Osceola, and Wexford Counties

Larry Smith, 231-745-4651

Oceana, Newaygo, and Mecosta Counties

Jeff Greene, 231-832-5520

Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP)

The southern Michigan deer herd appears to be stabilizing in some areas, and increasing in other areas. Deer hunters this year should see slightly more deer with a deer harvest slightly higher than the 2006 deer harvest. The 2007 herd remains at or above the desired levels in most areas, and the number of deer in much of southern Michigan is exceeding public tolerance for deer related incidents. The DNR is responding to concerns of too many deer in this part of the state with significant numbers of antlerless deer licenses for hunting on private lands. The SLP should produce some of the best white-tailed deer hunting in the nation for both antlered and antlerless deer. With landowner's permission, hunting in or near standing corn can be productive. Twenty eight SLP counties are open to the late antlerless only firearm season this year. Check the 2007 Hunting and Trapping Guide for the open counties.

SAGINAW BAY MANAGEMENT UNIT

Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties

Tim Reis: 989-684-9141

Hunters should expect a similar harvest in the Saginaw Bay Management Unit (SBMU), as experienced during the 2006 season.

Deer populations remain at or above goal in Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, and Bay counties; and greatly exceed desired population levels in Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties. The highest deer densities will be observed in the northern-most tier of counties. The distribution of deer is noticeably different on public and private lands. Greater numbers of deer will be observed on private land.

Fawn recruitment appears to be average across the management unit. It also appears that we may have experienced a greater number of late born fawns this summer, possibly due to the abundance of one-year-old does reproducing for the first time. Fawn survival appears to be above normal, which could mean slightly more deer in 2007.

Periods of hot, dry weather this summer impacted forage plants and mast (fruits and nuts) crops. Soft mast is very limited or non-existent in some areas, while acorn production is variable across the unit. Where oaks have produced decent acorn crops, the fruit appear partially developed and have prematurely dropped from the trees.

The timeliness of the harvest of agricultural crops impacts the deer harvest in the SBMU. Hunter success is best during years when most of the corn is harvested before the opening day of the firearm season. Warm, dry summer weather should work in the favor of deer hunters with the early harvest of many

agricultural crops. Deer will concentrate in brushy and forested cover types as a result.

Antlerless deer license quotas remain similar to last year. Again this year there will not be any public land antlerless licenses available for Clare, Gladwin, and Arenac counties. With the addition of Huron County this year, the entire "Thumb" area (Sanilac, Huron, and Tuscola counties) now has a late antlerless deer season.

"Especially in the Thumb counties deer hunters are encouraged to shoot adult does to assist in maintaining a healthy deer herd in balance with the habitat," said Tim Reis, SBMU supervisor.

Deer hunters are urged to visit a check station to assist with disease surveillance and data collection vital to the successful management of local deer herds.

Deer hunting opportunities exist on the many wetlands and managed waterfowl areas in the SBMU; however they may be limited during the waterfowl hunting season. Deer hunting is by permit only on the following managed waterfowl areas: Nayanquing Point, Fish Point, and the Shiawassee River State Game Area, as well as the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge. Hunters are encouraged to call ahead for specific details concerning deer hunting on these and other wetland areas.

Unit Biologists:

Clare, Gladwin, and Arenac counties:

Richard Shellenbarger, 989-426-9205, Ext 7630

Isabella, Midland, Bay, and Saginaw counties:

Adam Bump, 989-684-9141

Wetlands/Waterfowl Areas:

Barbara Avers, 989-865-6211

Huron, Tuscola, and Sanilac counties:

Arnie Karr, 989-872-5300

SOUTHEAST MANAGEMENT UNIT

Lapeer, Macomb, Genesee, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne Counties

Tim Payne: 248-359-9040

"Our goal in deer management is to maintain a quality, healthy herd that is in balance with its habitat," said Tim Payne, Southeast Wildlife Management Unit (SEMU) supervisor. The habitat of the management unit is diverse. Agriculture, scattered woodlots and wetlands predominate in the outer areas of Monroe, St. Clair, Lapeer, and Genesee counties, with the Tri-County and Flint area being heavily developed. Between these areas, in and around suburbs, are pockets of habitat where deer do survive. While most of these areas are not opened to

hunting; there are areas that allow archery hunting. These areas provide good hunting opportunities – but they do need scouting to obtain permission.

Throughout the management unit, deer are in good physical condition with good fawning rates being observed. Winter conditions rarely affect deer within the unit. Because of the dry summer conditions, abundance of natural foods including nut and fruit bearing trees and shrubs, and even agricultural crops is fair to good. Even though the spring was somewhat cool, it did not appear to impact fawn survival; in fact expect to see more fawns in 2007. Expect deer to be in good condition heading into the 2007 season. Early fall conditions are dry, so expect the fall crop harvest to be earlier than in 2006.

Macomb County is primarily private land hunting with the six northern townships providing hunters with the best opportunities to see and harvest deer. To access private lands, hunters will have to spend a great deal of time making the proper contacts and checking local ordinances. Overall deer numbers in Macomb County are up from the estimated 2006 deer population. Deer are not evenly distributed in the county. There will be some localized higher and lower density areas.

Overall, the highest deer densities in St. Clair County are in the northern half of the county. Deer numbers in northern St. Clair County continues to increase and is expected to be a little higher over 2006, with some localized spots with higher and lower deer densities. The southern half of the county will also have deer numbers similar to slightly higher over 2006; however some localized areas are expected to have slightly lower numbers. Buck harvest is expected to meet or exceed the 2006 harvest. The Port Huron State Game Area and the St. Clair Flats Wildlife Area (Harsens Island) provide hunters with good public hunting opportunities and support good deer numbers.

Liberal antlerless regulations in recent years have brought the deer herd in Monroe County closer to the desired deer population goal. Due to the very wet August agricultural crop, harvest will probably occur late this year. This will decrease deer visibility during the archery and firearm seasons. Overall, deer numbers in Monroe County are similar to those of 2006. There are limited state lands in Wayne County, so most deer hunting efforts will take place on private lands. To access private lands, hunters will have to spend a lot of time contacting private landowners and checking local ordinances to see if some townships are open to hunting. Respecting the property rights of others is the best way to ensure future hunting privileges for yourself and others. Do not hunt on lands of another without their permission. The highest deer population exists in the southwestern portion of Wayne County. Deer population levels in Wayne County are similar to last year. The expected buck and antlerless harvest should be less than the 2006 season; however local crop harvest, hunter pressure, and weather may influence hunting conditions and overall harvest rates. The

management goal in Monroe and Wayne Counties is to maintain a quality herd that is in balance with the habitat to yield healthy fawns, does, and bucks.

The deer population in Oakland County remains above goal. Much of this county is closed to firearm hunting, but many opportunities for archery may exist. Be sure to check with local townships to find what areas are open. The highest deer population exists in northeast Oakland County. Several state parks and recreation areas allow public hunting, but expect high hunting pressure during the first few days of firearm hunting. Hunters who have access to private land will find good deer hunting. Genesee County has good deer numbers, but there is no state land for public hunting in this county. Antler development is good in this county and those that have access to private land should find hunting opportunities good. Lapeer County has a stable deer population that is over the long term goal. Damage complaints from farmers are up in this area. Lapeer State Game Area is over 8,000 acres and supports a stable deer herd. For those eager to hike back into the less traveled areas of the game area, hunting should be excellent. Those with access to private land should have opportunities to see many deer.

Unit Biologists:

Macomb and St. Clair Counties:

Ernie Kafcas, 586-465-7214

Monroe and Wayne Counties:

Joe Robison, 734-379-9692

Oakland, Genesee, and Lapeer Counties:

Julie Oakes, 248-328-8113

SOUTH CENTRAL MANAGEMENT UNIT

Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Montcalm, Shiawassee and Washtenaw Counties

David Dominic: 517-641-4903

The South Central Management Unit (SCMU) deer population is above desired levels due to availability of suitable habitat components, mild weather conditions, and refuges from hunting (e.g. suburbs, preserves, and other areas closed to hunting like county and local parks as well as private land). The expected buck and antlerless harvest should be similar to the 2006 season throughout the SCMU. Drought conditions during the 2007 growing season has influenced the condition of natural deer foods and most likely influenced the increased use of crops by deer during the summer (as partially suggested by increased deer damage complaints and intensity of crop damage). These dry conditions may also affect the harvest of row crops, as many corn fields have already been harvested for silage in some areas of the SCMU. This may influence how deer use vegetative cover during the hunting seasons, as standing corn is harvested and deer move to alternative areas (forest and shrub vegetation types) to fulfill

cover requirements. Local crop harvest, hunter pressure, and weather will influence hunting conditions and overall harvest rates.

The counties with the highest deer populations are Montcalm, Jackson, Ionia, and Washtenaw. An adequate quota for private land antlerless deer licenses has been established in all SCMU counties in an effort to lower the deer populations in problem areas. The goal is to lower the deer population throughout most of the SCMU and private land access is the key to being successful. Hunters need to start scouting early and acquiring access to private lands. Hunters are encouraged to have their deer checked at one of the many Deer Check Stations throughout the state. A Michigan Deer Cooperator patch will be given to hunters who have their deer checked. Antlerless deer are of special interest and encouraged to be brought to the check stations.

A major change in deer hunting regulations for 2007 is that all 12 counties within the SCMU will be open during the late firearm antlerless season (Dec.17-Jan. 1). "Hunters are encouraged to use antlerless licenses to harvest deer in all seasons, including the late firearm antlerless season on private land," said Dave Dominic, SCMU supervisor. During this season, only antlerless deer on private lands may be taken with a firearm. Permission is required from the landowner and/or leaseholder; obtaining permission early will be to hunter's advantage. Remember: Archery season is also open during the late firearm antlerless season.

Availability of natural fall foods including wild apples, acorns, and preferred browse (lush new growth) appears to be down this year, likely due to drought conditions. The reduction of agricultural crops (after an early harvest) causing a food shortage will likely cause deer to concentrate in forested areas near available food sources.

Antlerless and buck harvest in 2007 for these counties is expected to be similar to the 2006 harvest. Hunters are encouraged to take more antlerless deer in throughout the SCMU. The late firearm season will give hunters the opportunity to harvest additional antlerless deer. Hunters are also encouraged to inquire about hunting privately owned cropland, where damage has been reaching intolerable levels. In an effort to assist farmers in alleviating crop damage, it is recommended that hunters asking for permission to hunt private property offer to take at least one antlerless deer before taking a buck.

Unit Biologists:

Eaton, Ionia, and Montcalm Counties:

John Niewoonder, 616-794-2658

Clinton, Gratiot, Ingham, Livingston, and Shiawassee Counties:

Earl Flegler, 517-373-9358

Jackson, Hillsdale, Lenawee, and Washtenaw Counties:

Kristin Bissell, 517-522-4097

SOUTHWESTERN MANAGEMENT UNIT

Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties

Sara Schaefer: 269-685-6851

Deer populations remain generally stable in the unit, but most counties have deer populations above established goals. Deer numbers continue to be very high in Barry, Calhoun, and Kent Counties, especially on private lands. Deer are becoming increasingly numerous in suburban and residential habitat areas throughout southwestern Michigan. Legal deer hunting is an important aspect of deer management in these areas.

Crop harvest started in September and is ahead of schedule this year due to extreme drought conditions in most of the southwest. Many farmers are chopping their corn for silage due to the poor quality of ear development. Acorn and soft mast production appears to be above average heading into the fall season. As a result, deer are expected to be well distributed across the landscape and perhaps more concentrated in oak dominated forests. Deer should continue to be in excellent physical condition.

Antlerless licenses are allocated by quotas in all the southwest DMUs, and all units have private land antlerless deer licenses. However, hunters may purchase no more than three private land antlerless licenses. In most southwest DMUs, there is no minimum acreage requirement. The exception is Muskegon County, where hunters may purchase no more than two private land antlerless licenses, and must obtain permission from landowners having access to 40 or more contiguous acres of hunting property. Hunters are reminded that Allegan, Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, Kent, Ottawa, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties are all open for the late firearm antlerless season, and are urged to take advantage of private land hunting opportunities in these counties.

2006 was an average harvest year throughout most of the southwest. In areas where deer populations remain above goal, the harvest of adult antlerless deer is an important part of responsible deer population management. Average fawn production in 2006 should result in consistent numbers of yearling bucks in most units.

“Landowners and hunters both play a critical role in deer management. Working together, we can support responsible antlerless deer harvest and reduce ecological damage, economic losses, and social concerns in areas with an over abundant deer herd,” said Sara Schaefer, Southwest Wildlife Management Unit supervisor. Hunters can contribute to Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger to process wild game for local families in need.

Access to private land is an important part of successful deer hunting and management in southwestern Michigan. Individual hunters can play important roles in maintaining hunting access. Please remember that courtesy, safety, and early pre-season contact with landowners are all vital parts of securing access to private hunting lands.

Unit Biologists:

Allegan, Berrien, Branch, Cass, St. Joseph, Kalamazoo (south), and Van Buren Counties:

Steve Chadwick, 269-685-6851

Allegan and Van Buren Counties:

John Lerg, 269-685-6851

Barry, Calhoun, and Kalamazoo (north) Counties:

Christine Hanaburgh 269-795-3280

Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa Counties:

Nik Kalejs, 231-788-5055